

**United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

**Environmental Assessment for
Hunting Camps in Association with Special Recreation
Permits**

Little Snake Field Office
455 Emerson Street
Craig, Colorado

DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2014-0022-EA

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BLM



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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 IDENTIFYING INFORMATION

PROJECT NAME: Programmatic analysis of the issuance of camping permits in association with hunting, guiding and outfitting Special Recreation Permits (SRPs).

PROJECT LOCATION AND LEGAL DESCRIPTION:
LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Little Snake Field Office (LSFO)

BACKGROUND/INTRODUCTION:

The applications for camping permits could occur anywhere in the 1.3 million acres of public lands managed by the LSFO. There are specifically three base camps sites that have been identified for analysis in this document; it is expected that future applications for camping permits would have impacts similar to those disclosed in this EA, therefore facilitating preparation of a Determination of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Adequacy (DNA). See Attachment 1-4 for the requested camping locations.

Special Recreation Permits

Under the authority of Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, the BLM uses the recreation permitting system to satisfy recreational demand within allowable use levels in an equitable, safe, and enjoyable manner while minimizing adverse resource impacts and user conflicts. BLM recreation permits authorize the permittees' use of public lands and/or related waters for specified purposes. The use of public lands and/or related waters is a privilege subject to the terms and conditions of the permits.

All commercial, competitive, and organized group SRP proposals are evaluated on a case by case basis, and their approval or disapproval will be at the discretion of the Authorized Officer (AO). At any time and without prior notice, the AO may choose not to issue permits for certain activities or use areas; decisions could be based on a variety of factors such as planning decisions, potential resource impacts, existing outfitters in the same area, overcrowding, and past poor performance. All SRPs are subject to site-specific review under NEPA and permits must be in conformance with the 2011 Little Snake Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP).

Application procedures are in accordance with the most current national and state policy as identified in the BLM SRP Handbook H-8372-1. All SRP applicants and permittees are required to read, abide by, and provide signature on the most current version of BLM Colorado SRP Terms, Conditions, and Stipulations for All Permitted Activities within the Little Snake Field Office SRP Policy and Application Package and if applicable, the BLM Colorado Special Stipulations for Competitive, Organized, and Off-Highway Vehicle Events. Terms, Conditions, and Stipulations can be located at <http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/lsfo.html> under programs-recreation-SRP. Additional stipulations may be added to each permit as the AO considers necessary.

NEPA Review

A decision to issue an SRP is a Federal action that is subject to review under NEPA. Categorical exclusions (CXs) are types of actions that the BLM has determined “do not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment (individually or cumulatively), and which, therefore neither an EA nor an EIS is required” in order to comply with NEPA (BLM NEPA Handbook, page 17). The BLM NEPA Handbook directs that field offices should use categorical exclusions to comply with the NEPA when appropriate to improve processing times.

As per 516 DM 11.9, H1, the BLM may use a CX for “Issuance of Special Recreation Permits for day use or overnight use up to 14 consecutive nights; that impacts no more than 3 staging area acres; and/or for recreational travel along roads, trails, or in areas authorized in a land use plan. This CX cannot be used for commercial boating permits along Wild and Scenic Rivers. This CX cannot be used for the establishment or issuance of Special Recreation Permits for “Special Area” management (43 CFR 2932.5)”. “Special areas” (43 CFR 2932.5) include areas “for which BLM determines that the resources require special management and control measures for their protection” and in the LSFO include Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) and one Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).

The majority of existing SRPs in the LSFO, which are for commercial big game or mountain lion outfitting, do not always meet the criteria for the CX as described above. Typically commercial operations for big game and mountain lion guided hunting involve setting up hunting camps that span greater than 14 consecutive days and/or are requested in special areas.

Preparing a programmatic camping EA for camping associated with hunting, guiding and outfitting SRPs that do not meet the CX criteria rather than preparing case-by-case EAs would allow the BLM to examine the impacts from these types of events at a landscape-level and respond appropriately. A programmatic EA also sets an expectation for applicants as to the type of standards they must meet to be considered as eligible for an event, thus making the permitting process more efficient for everyone. While site-specific NEPA analyses would be required for each permit, the LSFO would likely tier to the programmatic EA for some of the impacts analysis conducted at the programmatic level, thus reducing the costs and time needed to complete the NEPA process. The BLM would only tier to the programmatic EA if the analysis is detailed enough for the type of action to show that BLM took the requisite hard look as required by the NEPA. It is expected that most future camping SRP proposals would have impacts similar to those disclosed in this EA, therefore facilitating preparation of a DNA. The standard procedure for the LSFO is to have at least a staff biologist, a staff archeologist, and a staff ecologist review and provide input on all DNA proposals. This business practice is intended to reduce redundant analysis, improve response times for SRP applications, and improve operational efficiency.

1.4 PURPOSE & NEED FOR THE ACTION

The purpose of this action is to provide for a broad spectrum and diversity of recreation opportunities by issuing camping permits, in association with SRPs, to qualified applicants for

commercial activities that may span more than 14 consecutive days while incorporating the necessary terms and conditions required to minimize impacts to other resources and resource uses. The proposed action would also provide a more updated and efficient process to meet public demands for camping in association with hunting, guiding and outfitting SRPs in the LSFO. SRPs are discretionary authorizations that provide a means to deliver recreational opportunities and experiences to the public that would otherwise not be able to be realized, manage visitor use, protect natural and cultural resources, and achieve the goals and objectives outlined in the RMP. The need for the proposed action is established by the BLM's responsibility under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) to respond to a request for a SRP. SRPs are required for commercial, competitive, and organized group activities under 43 CFR 2930.

1.4.1 Decision to be made: The BLM will decide whether or not to grant camping permits for hunting, guiding and outfitting activities. The BLM will also decide what terms, stipulations, or conditions would be necessary to reduce impacts to other resources and resource uses.

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW

The Proposed Action and Alternatives are subject to and have been reviewed for conformance with the following plan:

Name of Plan: Little Snake Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (RMP)

Date Approved: October 2011

Decision Language: The Proposed Action and Alternatives are consistent with the Little Snake Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan, Recreation, Goal A; manage for special recreation permit services.

Section/Page: 2.15 Recreation/RMP-42, 50

SCOPING, PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AND ISSUES

Scoping: NEPA regulations (40 CFR §1500-1508) require that the BLM use a scoping process to identify potential significant issues in preparation for impact analysis. The principal goals of scoping are to allow public participation to identify issues, concerns, and potential impacts that require detailed analysis.

External Scoping Summary: The action in this EA is included in the NEPA log posted on the LSFO web site: http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/BLM_Information/nepa/lsfo.html.

Internal Scoping Summary: The proposed action was presented to the Little Snake Field Office (LSFO) interdisciplinary team on 04/21/2014.

Persons/Agencies Consulted: The BLM consulted with the applicants to determine the three camping areas analyzed in this EA.

Issues Identified: The internal interdisciplinary team raised the following issues:

- Displacement/disruption of wildlife
- Trampling of sensitive soils/riparian areas
- Spread of noxious weeds
- Trampling of sensitive plants

CHAPTER 2 - PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide information on the proposed action and alternatives. Alternatives considered but not analyzed in detail are also discussed. The issues identified during scoping helped to formulate the Proposed Action.

2.2 ALTERNATIVES ANALYZED IN DETAIL

2.2.1 Proposed Action

Camping in association with hunting, guiding and outfitting services is needed by members of the public to provide expertise, equipment and services to facilitate a variety of outdoor recreation activities and to help minimize resource or social impacts. Many members of the public who desire hunting, guiding and outfitting services would otherwise be unable to accomplish these types of activities on their own for a variety of reasons which may include physical or mental challenges, lack of knowledge of the local area, lack of equipment and resources or just prefer the convenience of a guided experience. Commercial service providers play an important role in facilitating public use and enjoyment of the recreation opportunities available on public lands. Camps associated with SRPs are common for commercial guides and outfitters and are often necessary for the safety and comfort of their clients.

The proposed action is to issue camping permits associated with a hunting, guiding and outfitting services SRPs. As applications are received, the LSFO would evaluate each camping application (preferred camp and alternatives) associated with guide and outfitting services. Camps related to hunting/guiding/outfitting would enable hunters/clients to better access remote areas without hours of travel time and the base camps would help to take hunting pressure off the main access roads at dawn and dusk. The camps would make hunting safer for hunters from lower altitudes, enable public enjoyment of the areas, and serve as a rest and shelter station during the day.

Hunting camps could be set up approximately 5 days before the start of hunting seasons which generally start in late August and would be taken down at the conclusion of the last hunting season or ending dates posted on the camping permit. A typical base camp for guide and outfitting operations would include a maximum of four sleeping tents and one cook tent for approximately 20 people or 8 RVs and one cook tent. The approximate area required for a base camp is approximately 250 feet by 200 feet and approximately 150 feet by 100 feet for a drop camp.

Camping permits would be issued under a DNA or a CX if adequate analysis has been completed and criteria for the use of a DNA or CX outlined in the *National Environmental Policy Act Handbook* are met. Camping permits for less than 14 consecutive days could be issued under a CX. See *Appendix 4. H.1*

Camping request or permits may be denied if site analyses identify issues or concerns with the camp location or the time of year. If denied, the requestor may ask for another time or area that would meet resource objectives and goals. Three campsites have been identified and will be analyzed in this EA. See Attachment 1,2,3,4 for campsite locations.

Drop Camps in WSAs

While at the camp, Leave-No-Trace and Tread Lightly ethics would be practiced. Guides on horseback would pack equipment and supplies in, and take harvested game and any trash out daily. Sites would be selected away from any known streams to avoid potential contamination. A composting toilet would be used and all waste would be packed out regularly. All cooking would be done on a propane cook stove. All water and food would be packed in and all trash and other waste would be packed out. Horses would return to the ranch for feed and water daily. During the day, horses would be hobbled due to limited tree cover at the proposed camp locations. Hunters would be given the option to either hike into the sites or ride via horseback.

Camps in ERMA/SRMAs

Camps outside of WSAs would have the same Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and Best Management Practices (BMPs) as camps within WSAs, with the exception that motorized vehicles could be used to service the camps.

Resource-specific Design Features:

Soils:

1. No commercial camping would be permitted on “fragile soils” as described by NRCS as those soils with the following characteristics: slopes greater than or equal to 35%; surface texture that is sand, loamy sand, very fine sandy loam, silty clay, or clay; a depth to bedrock of less than 20 inches; an erosion condition rates as “poor”; or a K-factor greater than 0.32.
2. Camps should be established on durable surfaces such as rock, gravel, dry grasses or snow.

Surface Water Quality and Riparian Areas:

1. No camping within riparian areas or within 200 feet of lakes, streams, rivers, springs and seeps.
2. Human waste and trash shall be properly disposed of or packed out.
3. The applicant assumes all risks associated with any consumption of water located on public lands. No camping or associated support facilities or concentrated activities shall occur in a manner which will destroy, severely damage or alter the quality of flowing water or of drainage channels/banks and their associated vegetation.

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Wildlife:

1. No commercial camping would be permitted within 1 mile of a greater sage-grouse or a Columbian sharp-tailed grouse lek.
2. No commercial camping would be permitted within 0.25 miles of any known raptor nest.
3. No camping within riparian areas or within ¼ mile of perennial water.
4. Additional protective measures, as described in the LSFO ROD Appendix B, would be applied as necessary when new sites are identified.
5. Commercial camping would only be permitted between August 1 and December 30.

Special Status Plants:

1. No commercial camping would be permitted within 0.25 miles of any existing special status plant population unless biological surveys are conducted during the growing season. Applications would not be permitted for camping activities during the active growing season.

Upland Vegetation:

1. Authorized use of livestock for transportation will not establish a priority for future use. Because domestic livestock kept in close quarters for extended periods of time can cause severe damage to vegetation, livestock shall not be tied up for extended periods to woody vegetation. Picket lines or other livestock restraints or containment methods will be employed in a manner so to prevent substantial damage to woody vegetation. Animals must not be tied, corralled, or picketed within 200 feet of any lake, stream, or developed campground or other developed facility.

Weeds/Range:

1. Any livestock feed used on public lands must be certified weed free.
2. Camp locations would be monitored on an annual basis for weed infestations and treated as needed.

Recreation/Wilderness/Lands with Wilderness Characteristics:

1. Timing limitations may be implemented if excessive conflicts with hunting is expected or cannot be mitigated.
2. When camps or other facilities are dismantled, the area shall be left in a natural state; surface evidence of ground campfire rings/structures and burned materials shall be completely eliminated.

3. The permittee shall be required to pack out all refuse and organic garbage (burnable and non-burnable) for proper disposal.
4. Campfires shall not be left unattended. The permittee shall be responsible for the control of any fire which he/she or his/her employees, agents or clients starts and will be liable for any damages and fire suppression costs resulting from such fire(s) causing a wildfire. The permittee shall ensure all persons affiliated with his party adhere to any fire use restrictions in effect on public land and report to BLM any observed wildfires. At a minimum, a permittee shall keep at least one shovel at a campsite as a fire control and suppression tool.
5. All temporary facilities (such as corrals, shelters and storage caches) must be described in the permit application and are subject to approval by BLM. Unless otherwise authorized, all structures shall be fully dismantled and removed if a camp will be vacated for more than two consecutive nights. No year-round, permanent camps or support facilities may be established on BLM-administered public lands.
6. All domestic animals will be kept under control in route to and at a camp site to protect wildlife, livestock, vegetation, and other public land users. The chasing or harassment by dogs or people of domestic livestock or of an individual animal not being legally hunted is not a permitted activity.

Cultural/Heritage Resources:

1. Historic, archeological or vertebrate paleontological materials shall not be disturbed or collected

Hazardous or Solid Wastes:

1. The permittee shall maintain all camp location premises to standards of repair, orderliness, neatness, and sanitation acceptable to BLM's authorized officer. Camp areas will be regularly cleaned and no trash or litter will be allowed to accumulate.
2. The permittee shall be responsible for providing proper human sanitation facilities. The permittee shall provide pit type or portable toilets at all camps. Earthen toilet pits must be deep enough to place a required minimum of one foot of soil into the pit when finished with the pit or vacating camp, whichever occurs first. BLM has the discretion of conducting an on-site determination of the minimum method of disposal prior to actual use.
3. No waste or by-products or substances shall be discharged on public lands or waters if they contain any properties in concentrations that would result in harm to soils, vegetation, fish, wildlife and/or humans, or to water sources such as streams, springs, reservoirs, guzzlers, or subsurface water.
4. All waste from harvested game or other animals must be disposed of in a sanitary manner away from a campsite and out of view of where human use occurs.

Realty Authorizations:

1. Casual use of existing roads is permitted. Casual use does not apply to blading, maintaining, upgrading existing roads or any surface disturbance off of existing routes.

Access and Transportation:

1. The permittee is responsible for being informed of and complying with off-road vehicle (OHV) use designations and restrictions that exist within the area of operation. Permit issuance does not waive any OHV use restrictions, whether local, State or Federal. Restricted use of mechanical vehicles, (such as bicycles and game carts) can be stipulated to protect resources, minimize use conflicts and provide for public safety. OHV designation information is available at the LSFO office.
2. Unless otherwise stipulated by BLM, camp sites and associated activities which are supported by motorized vehicles shall not be established beyond 300 feet off a road. In areas designated closed to vehicular use or restricted to designated vehicular routes (including but not limited to WSAs and ACEC), off-road motorized vehicle use is not permitted.

Wild Horses:

1. No commercial camping would be permitted within 1 mile radius from July 1 to Dec 1 from Wild Horse Spring, Sheepherder Spring, Coffee Pot Spring, Two Bar Spring, and Dugout Draw Spring.

Mine Permit Boundaries

1. No commercial camping would be permitted within mine permit boundaries. This includes mines that are in the reclamation phase.

2.2.3 No Action Alternative

The BLM would consider applications for camping in association with hunting, guiding and outfitting SRPs, but on a case-by-case base, through stand-alone NEPA analysis (i.e. most likely an environmental assessment). It is possible that applications would be delayed or even denied if the application could not be processed under CX516 DM 11.9, H1.

CHAPTER 3 – AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND EFFECTS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Affected Resources:

The CEQ Regulations state that NEPA documents “must concentrate on the issues that are truly significant to the action in question, rather than amassing needless detail” (40 CFR 1500.1(b)). While many issues may arise during scoping, not all of the issues raised warrant analysis in an environmental assessment (EA). Issues will be analyzed if: 1) an analysis of the issue is necessary to make a reasoned choice between alternatives, or 2) if the issue is associated with a significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impact, or where analysis is necessary to determine the

significance of the impacts. Table 1 lists the resources considered and the determination as to whether they require additional analysis.

Table 1. Resources and Determination of Need for Further Analysis

Determination ¹	Resource	Resource Issue/ Rationale for Determination	Specialist Initials	Date
Physical Resources				
NI	Air Quality	Activities associated with camping permits that may affect air quality, namely dust and exhaust from hunting/guiding/outfitting operations, fall below EPA emission standards for the six criteria pollutants of concern (sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, ground-level ozone, carbon monoxide, particulate matter [both PM _{2.5} and PM ₁₀], and lead). Furthermore, hunting/guiding/outfitting activities are not a significant sources of these pollutant emissions that do occur in Moffat County. Impacts to air quality caused by either alternative are therefore considered negligible.	KLM	07/15/14
NI	Floodplains	There are FEMA-identified 100-year floodplains with the LSFO resource area that are subject to rare and/or occasional flooding. None of the alternatives analyzed include development within identified floodplains. Due to the temporary nature of the camps, no threat to human safety, life, welfare and property would result from implementing any of the alternatives.	KLM	07/15/14
NI	Hydrology, Ground	Camping permits as described in the Proposed Action would have no impacts to ground water hydrology.	KLM	07/15/14
NI	Hydrology, Surface	Camping permits as described in the Proposed Action would have no impacts to surface water hydrology	KLM	07/15/14
NI	Minerals, Fluid	Camping would not be allowed on authorized wells sites, including well pads that are undergoing reclamation.	SW	07/21/14
NI	Minerals, Solid	Camping would not be allowed within mine permit boundaries, including mines that are undergoing reclamation.	JM	07/17/14
PI	Soils	See discussion in Section 3.2.2	KLM	07/15/14
NI	Water Quality, Ground	Camping permits as described in the Proposed Action would have no impacts to ground water quality.	KLM	07/15/14
PI	Water Quality, Surface	See discussion in Section 3.2.3	KLM	07/15/14
Biological Resources				

Determination ¹	Resource	Resource Issue/ Rationale for Determination	Specialist Initials	Date
PI	Invasive, Non-native Species	See discussion in Section 3.3.1	CBR	7/18/14
PI	Migratory Birds	See discussion in Section 3.3.2	DMA	07/15/14
PI	Special Status Animal Species	See discussion in Section 3.3.3	DMA	07/15/14
NI	Special Status Plant Species	See discussion in Section 3.3.4	ARH	07/14/14
PI	Upland Vegetation	See discussion in Section 3.3.5	MAL	07/29/14
PI	Wetlands and Riparian Zones	See discussion in Section 3.3.6	KLM	07/15/14
NI	Wildlife, Aquatic	There would be no camping allowed in riparian areas or within ¼ mile of perennial water, so there would be no impact to aquatic wildlife or their habitat.	DMA	07/15/14
PI	Wildlife, Terrestrial	See discussion in Section 3.3.7	DMA	07/15/14
PI	Wild Horses	See discussion in Section 3.3.8	KLM	07/15/14
Heritage Resources and the Human Environment				
PI	Cultural Resources	See discussion in Section 3.4.1	BSN	07/16/14
NI	Environmental Justice	According to Census 2012, the only minority population of note in the impact area is the Hispanic community of Moffat County. Hispanic or Latino represented 14.2% of the population, considerably less the Colorado state figure for the same group, 21.0%. Blacks, American Indians, Asians and Pacific Islanders each accounted for around 1% of the population, below the comparable state figure in all cases. The census counted 12% of the Moffat County population as living in families with incomes below the poverty line, compared to 12.9% for the entire state. Both minority and low income populations are dispersed throughout the county therefore no minority or low income populations would suffer disproportionately high and adverse effects as a result of any of the alternatives.	LM	07/15/14
NI	Hazardous or Solid Wastes	There would only be minor impacts or issues caused by implementation of the proposed action. See Resource-specific Design Features for specifics related to Hazardous or Solid Wastes.	DJA	7/16/2014
NI	Lands with Wilderness Characteristics	Subject to WO-IM 2011-154 and in accordance with BLM policy, some of the proposed project areas fall within areas	GMR	7/15/14

Determination ¹	Resource	Resource Issue/ Rationale for Determination	Specialist Initials	Date
		greater than 5000 acres which may be suitable as lands with wilderness characteristics. The proposed action may impact but not impair wilderness characteristics; however, outfitting activities are appropriate and consistent with applicable requirements of law and other resource management considerations, and is approved by the field manager.		
PI	Native American Religious Concerns	See Section 3.4.2	BSN	7/16/14
PI	Paleontological Resources	Standard Paleontology Stipulations will be added to all SRP's.		
NI	Social and Economic Conditions	There will not be any change to local social or economic conditions.	LM	7/15/14
NI	Visual Resources	The proposed action does not conflict with this resource.	GMR	7/15/14
NI	Access and Transportation	There is no resource related issues to Access and Transportation because travel related impacts while camping would be minor and no different than what's expected from the general public during the same hunting seasons.	DA	7/10/2014
NI	Fire Management	No impact Fire Management if fire restrictions are followed if in effect	DB	7/17/14
NI	Forest Management	Not enough area is impacted to be of significance	DB	7/17/2014
PI	Livestock Operations	See discussion in Section 3.4.3	KLM	07/15/14
NI	Prime and Unique Farmlands	There are soils identified as farmland of statewide importance within the project area. Generally, farmlands of statewide importance include those that are nearly prime farmland and that economically produce high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods. None of these soils are or would become irrigated or otherwise manipulated so as to create conditions favorable to create prime farmland on public lands within the allotment.	KLM	07/15/14
NI	Realty Authorizations, Land Tenure		LM	07/15/14
NI	Recreation	The BLM recreation program would stand to benefit from camping permits issued under the SRP program. Camping permits would allow the BLM to enhance and perpetuate education, enforcement and Leave NoTrace ethics.	DA	7/10/2014
Special Designations				

Determination ¹	Resource	Resource Issue/ Rationale for Determination	Specialist Initials	Date
NI	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	No camping is allowed outside the Irish Canyon Campground to protect sensitive plants, remnant plant communities, cultural and geologic values, and scenic quality. Outfitter camping within the campground would be analyzed on a case-by-case basis.	GMR	7/15/2014
NI	Wild and Scenic Rivers	For most commercial recreational activities, there would be no impacts to the suitability of wild and scenic river segments. Any commercial recreation permit application that would include activities such as camping or other assembled human presence in a specific area (within 0.25 mile of each side of the river) would need to be reviewed to ensure that the suitability of the threatened and endangered fish spawning habitat is maintained, and only designated roads and trails are used; therefore project location might need to be adjusted to avoid impacts.	GMR	7/15/2014
PI	Wilderness Study Areas	See Chapter 3.5.2	GMR	7.15.2014

¹ NP = Not present in the area impacted by the Proposed Action or Alternatives. NI = Present, but not affected to a degree that detailed analysis is required. PI = Present with potential for impact analysis in detail in the EA.

3.2 PHYSICAL RESOURCES

3.2.12 Soils

Affected Environment: The region of influence (ROI) for soils is the resource management plan planning area (RMPPA), which is in the Moffat, Routt, and Rio Blanco Soil Survey areas. The Moffat and Routt surveys, which cover most of the RMPPA, are unpublished. The Rio Blanco survey has been published, but applies to a very small portion of the RMPPA. Soil attributes that are most important to BLM's management decisions are fragility, rangeland soil fertility, and upland soil health.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: All permittees are required to practice tread lightly and leave no trace land ethics which would reduce unnecessary damage to soils. Use of trails and roads during the hunting season may cause erosion in localized areas that would depend on the size of the camp and the number of participants. Base camps and drop camps are likely to result in compacted soils that may change rainfall and runoff responses in soils. Soils that are likely to become saturated during use should be avoided when possible.

Authorizing commercial use special recreation permits that protect resources would ensure that impacts on vegetation and soils were considered and minimized and that subsequent erosion by wind and water would not increase above natural rates as a result of commercial recreation use. In addition, soils management action would ensure that applicants with permits for surface

disturbing activities would comply with soil performance objectives, maintaining soils and soils productivity.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: Impacts from management actions related to special recreation permits and required compliance with performance objectives do not vary by alternative. Under the no action alternative, camping permits would be analyzed on a case-by-case basis.

Environmental Consequences, Cumulative Impacts: Oil and gas exploration and development in the LSFO could result in road and pad construction, pipeline installation, drilling and completion activities that have the potential to impact soils. Livestock grazing occurs on public and private lands in the area and these activities may reduce canopy cover and lead to localized erosion in some areas. There is some dispersed recreation, mostly in the form of hunting, and livestock grazing, that disturb soils, result in changes in surface runoff, create some localized erosion and decrease the productivity and stability of soils in some locations. This action is not likely to add to or reduce overall cumulative effects. Permitted activities may reduce soil productivity in localized areas of disturbance, but are unlikely to impact overall soil productivity.

3.2.23 Water Quality, Surface

Affected Environment: The RMPPA is located within three basins of the Colorado River Region. Most of the RMPPA is within the White-Yampa River Basin and the Upper Green River Basin. The Yampa River, formed by headwater creeks in the eastern end of the RMPPA, is joined by the Elk River, Elkhead Creek, Fortification Creek, Williams Fork River, Little Snake River, and other more minor tributaries before it joins the Green River at the western end of the RMPPA. The Yampa River serves as the southern boundary of the western portion of the RMPPA. There are no major reservoirs or impoundments on BLM-administered land in the RMPPA.

Data on surface water quality are available for the Colorado River Basin and subbasins from the State of Colorado and LSFO landscape health assessments (LHA) reports. Surface water quality in the Colorado River Basin is generally satisfactory, although runoff from agricultural areas, abandoned mines, and naturally occurring saline springs causes localized problems associated with elevated salinity levels. Salinity is a measure of total dissolved solids including all inorganic material in solution. High levels of salinity threaten the multitude of uses supported by Colorado River water.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Impacts with regard to surface disturbance and potential erosion are described in the Soil Resources section. With design features, these activities are unlikely to contribute measurable changes in water quality with the exception of base camps or drop camps close to perennial waters. Camps located within 200 feet of perennial waters or wetlands increases the potential to impact water quality by introducing pollutants or changing the runoff and infiltration properties of compacted soils. An undisturbed buffer of 200 feet around these features should reduce the potential impacts by filtering out generated

pollutants and allowing for infiltration of increased runoff by stable vegetation between the camps and the perennial water or wetlands.

Issues that may result from human waste, pollutants, and trash disposal are addressed in the recreation permit term, conditions and stipulations and should be adequate to address potential impacts from these types of issues that could occur due to the use of the camps.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: Impacts from management actions related to special recreation permits and required compliance with performance objectives do not vary by alternative. Under the no action alternative, camping permits would be analyzed on a case-by-case basis.

Environmental Consequences, Cumulative Impacts: Oil and gas exploration and development in the LSFO may result in road and pad construction, pipeline installation, drilling and completion activities that have the potential to impact surface waters. There is also surface water use for oil and gas activities including drilling, domestic use, construction, dust abatement, well completion activities, and hydrostatic testing of pipelines. Livestock grazing occurs on public and private lands in the area and these activities may reduce canopy cover and lead to localized erosion in some reclamation areas. There is some dispersed recreation, mostly in the form of hunting, and livestock grazing, that disturb soils, result in changes in surface runoff, create some localized erosion and decrease the productivity and stability of soils in some locations. This action is not likely to add to or reduce overall cumulative effects. Permitted activities may reduce soil productivity in localized areas of disturbance, but are unlikely to impact water quality.

3.3 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

3.3.1 Invasive/Non-Native Species

Affected Environment: Noxious weeds are present throughout the LSFO management area. Species off of Colorado's C and B Lists of Noxious Weeds can be found in spot locations and dense infestations. The most common noxious weeds in the area include downy brome (cheatgrass), halogeton, hoary cress (white top), Canada thistle, scotch thistle, musk thistle, bull thistle, Russian knapweed, spotted knapweed, leafy spurge, houndstongue, Dalmatian toadflax, yellow toadflax, perennial pepperweed (tall whitetop), tamarisk and Russian olive. Management and control of these weeds are implemented through coordinated efforts of multiple weed control partnerships. All facets of Integrated Pest Management are implemented through the LSFO noxious weed control program.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Weeds can be spread through many activities on public lands including human recreational use. Activities that bring people to a site could introduce new infestations through seeds carried by clothing, transportation vehicles, domestic animals, feed products, tents, etc. Additionally, during these type of activities where users would be moving between locations seeds from one infestation could be carried away from the site causing a spread to other areas and locations. The risk of weed spread can be reduced by applying appropriate weed awareness methods when selecting a site and responsible use of the area. Compliance with conditions of approval and special stipulations that require use of certified

weed free forage as well as minimal disturbance to vegetation communities will help reduce the potential for establishment of invasive species.

Environmental Consequences, No Action Alternative: Under this alternative, camping permits would be analyzed on an individual basis.

Environmental Consequences, Cumulative Impacts: This analysis includes three specific sites to be permitted for camp sites. While this number will likely increase, documentation of camping locations would allow for potential infestations to be easily detected and centralized for any needed control methods. While the risk of infestation under either alternative is high the potential for spread under the proposed action is acceptable.

3.3.2 Migratory Birds

Affected Environment: The LSFO includes over 1.3 million acres of BLM managed lands and spans a variety of elevations and vegetation communities. The diversity of vegetation communities provides habitat for a variety of migratory songbirds. The LSFO is located within two Bird Conservation Regions – Northern Rockies and Southern Rockies/ Colorado Plateau. Several species on the USFWS's Birds of Conservation Concern (BCC) list for these regions occupy habitats within the LSFO.

Salt desert communities composed of fourwing saltbush, shadscale, Wyoming big sagebrush, and greasewood are found at lower elevations. These areas may contain colonies of white-tailed prairie dogs, which provide habitat for two BCC listed species, burrowing owls and ferruginous hawks. Extensive shrublands dominate much of the LSFO. Most shrubs in these areas are either big sagebrush or deciduous mountain shrubs such as bitterbrush and serviceberry. Birds listed on the BCC list that nest in shrublands include: Brewer's sparrow, sage thrasher, sage sparrow and loggerhead shrike.

Pinyon-juniper woodlands are widely distributed across resource area. Two pinyon-juniper obligate birds on the BCC list are pinyon jay and juniper titmouse. Limited higher elevation aspen stands and coniferous forests are also present within the resource area. These forests provide habitat for two BCC listed species, flammulated owl and Cassin's finch.

Rock outcrops and cliffs provide nesting habitat for a variety of raptor species, including golden eagles, prairie falcons and peregrine falcons. Cottonwood galleries along the Yampa and Little Snake Rivers and their major tributaries provide nesting areas for bald eagles.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: The four known hunting camp locations would have very minor impacts to migratory birds and migratory bird habitat. Since the camps would be utilized from August through December, nesting activities would not be impacted. Birds may be displaced from the camping site during the hunting season, but due to the time of year, this would be a minor impact. Very localized degradation of habitat may occur in each camp location. Congregation of people, vehicles and camp supplies may cause crushing and killing of vegetation, introduction and spread of weed and soil erosion, rutting and compaction. Since camp sizes would be relatively small, this impact would be minor on a landscape level.

Additional camp sites for hunting would be approved on a case by case basis. Impacts to migratory birds would be similar as those described for the known sites above. Design features would help minimize potential impacts to migratory birds and their habitat. Locations that would have a negative impact to migratory birds would not be approved.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: Impacts from management actions related to special recreation permits and required compliance with performance objectives do not vary by alternative. Under the no action alternative, camping permits would be analyzed on a case-by-case basis.

Environmental Consequences, Cumulative Impacts: Various activities are occurring within the Little Snake Field Office, including coal mining, oil and gas development, livestock grazing and recreational activities. Since the SRP campsites are few in number and would have very minor impacts to migratory birds and their habitat, the cumulative effect of permitting the campsites would not be substantial.

3.3.3 Special Status Animal Species

Affected Environment: The Little Snake resource area provides habitat for several BLM sensitive species and ESA listed and candidate species. Critical habitat for bonytail, humpback chub, razorback sucker and Colorado pikeminnow has been designated within the LSFO. Potential habitat for Greenback cutthroat trout, Mexican spotted owl, Canada lynx, black-footed ferret and yellow-billed cuckoo is located in specific areas within the resource area.

BLM sensitive species that are known to occur on BLM lands within the LSFO include: greater sage-grouse (also an ESA candidate species), white-tailed prairie dog, northern goshawk, burrowing owl, ferruginous hawk, mountain plover, peregrine falcon, bald eagle, long-billed curlew, American white pelican, Brewer's sparrow, Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, bluehead sucker, flannelmouth sucker, mountain sucker, roundtail chub, Colorado River cutthroat trout, midget faded rattlesnake, northern leopard frog and Great Basin spadefoot.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: None of the identified camping sites are located in areas that provide habitat for any ESA listed or Proposed species. None of these sites would have negative impacts to any sensitive species. Additional camp sites for hunting would be approved on a case by case basis. Design features would help minimize potential impacts to sensitive species and their habitat. Proposed sites that would have a negative impact to any sensitive species would not be approved.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: Impacts from management actions related to special recreation permits and required compliance with performance objectives do not vary by alternative. Under the no action alternative, camping permits would be analyzed on a case-by-case basis.

Environmental Consequences, Cumulative Impacts: Cumulative impacts would be similar to those described in the Migratory Bird section.

3.3.4 Special Status Plant Species

Affected Environment: The proposed project area contains the following populations of plants listed as sensitive by BLM Colorado: Duchesne milkvetch (*Astragalus duchesnensis*), Caespitose Cat's-eye (*Cryptantha caespitosa*) previously known as tufted cryptantha (*Oreocarya caespitosa*), narrow leaf evening primrose (*Oenothera acutissima*) and Gibbens' beardtongue (*Penstemon gibbensii*). While these species are not protected under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), their rarity and potential for listing has resulted in recognition by the BLM Colorado that proactive conservation measures are necessary to reduce or eliminate threats, minimizing the likelihood of and need for listing of these species under the ESA. BLM would take all necessary actions to mitigate any adverse impacts to existing populations of these species. These populations are highly localized and not generally located in areas that are subjected to surface disturbance from recreational activities. There are no federally listed threatened or endangered plant species populations identified within the project area. There is one federally listed threatened plant species found within Moffat County. Although, there are no plant populations located on BLM surface lands within the Little Snake Field Office jurisdiction. Potentially suitable habitat could exist for the threatened plant species, Ute Ladies' Tresses (*Spiranthes diluvialis*) along the Yampa River. Modeling of potential habitat and surveys for this species are scheduled to be conducted during 2014.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: For most commercial recreational activities, there would be no impacts to BLM sensitive species. Most proposed activities would not result in surface disturbance. Any commercial recreation permit application that would include activities such as camping or other assembled human presence in a specific area would need to be reviewed for its proximity to existing sensitive plant populations. If a proposed activity were to occur on or in close proximity to such a population the project location would need to be adjusted to avoid impacts and accommodate a 0.25 mile buffer. In extraordinary circumstances botanical clearance surveys could be conducted during the growing season to avoid impacts to existing populations and approve SRP applications.

Environmental Consequences, No Action Alternative: Any impacts would be addressed in project-specific EAs.

Environmental Consequences, Cumulative Impacts: Rare plants within the project area owe their rarity to unusually specific habitat requirements rather than widespread disturbance or loss of available habitat. Most populations of BLM sensitive plant species are primarily affected by factors such as herbivory from livestock and wildlife, off-highway vehicle use, climactic fluctuations, and, for some species, changes in hydrologic conditions. Surface disturbance from energy development, construction of range improvements, and other capital improvements can result in highly localized loss of habitat and individual plants or local populations. The Proposed Action would not add additional impacts or threats to special status plant populations beyond those that already exist.

3.3.5 Upland Vegetation

Affected Environment: Vegetative communities in the area of proposed action are diverse and varied including but not limited to: sagebrush grassland, pinyon juniper, mountain shrub, and greasewood flats.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action & No Action Alternative: Either alternative would have very minor and localized impacts to vegetative. In addition, the season of use for the Proposed Action is during the dormant season for most plant species within the area of Proposed Action. There would be no adverse impacts to upland vegetation.

Environmental Consequences, Cumulative Impacts: The Proposed Action, when combined with the past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions could elevate the *potential* for the deterioration of upland vegetation communities within specific plant communities. However, changes in future Public Land uses are not anticipated.

3.3.6 Wetlands and Riparian Zones

Affected Environment: Riparian and wetland areas are those areas that contain water during all or a portion of the growing season. Riparian and wetland areas are scattered throughout the Resource Area and account for 0.7 percent of the vegetation communities within the Resource Area. These areas support a variety of vegetation (from herbaceous to woody species) that is typically adapted to life in saturated soil conditions. For a more detailed discussion on riparian/wetland communities and their occurrence within the Resource Area refer to LSFO RMP page3-25.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Due to their nature and location, riparian and wetland areas are often subjected to inordinately high levels of recreational use. Impacts to riparian habitats would depend on the type, duration, and intensity of the activity. Activities associated with base camps, and drop camps may result in some trampling of vegetation, but in would likely be confined to existing roads or trails. Camping activities that involve larger concentrations of participants and larger areas would be expected to result in vegetation trampling and, depending on the intensity, may even result in the direct loss of vegetation. Loss or modification of riparian habitat has the potential to influence aquatic wildlife and water quality, however adherence to the stipulations listed under Wetland/Riparian Areas above would avoid these impacts.

Environmental Consequences, No Action Alternative: Impacts from management actions related to special recreation permits and required compliance with performance objectives do not vary by alternative. Under the no action alternative, camping permits would be analyzed on a case-by-case basis.

Environmental Consequences, Cumulative Impacts: Oil and gas exploration and development in the LSFO may result in road and pad construction, pipeline installation, drilling and completion activities that have the potential to impact surface waters. There is also surface water use for oil and gas activities including drilling, domestic use, construction, dust abatement,

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well completion activities, and hydrostatic testing of pipelines. Livestock grazing occurs on public and private lands in the area and these activities may reduce canopy cover and lead to localized erosion in some reclamation areas. There is some dispersed recreation, mostly in the form of hunting, and livestock grazing, that disturb soils, result in changes in surface runoff, create some localized erosion and decrease the productivity and stability of soils in some locations. This action is not likely to add to or reduce overall cumulative effects. Permitted activities may reduce soil productivity in localized areas of disturbance, but are unlikely to impact water quality.

3.3.7 Wildlife, Terrestrial

Affected Environment: A variety of wildlife habitats and their associated species occurs in the project area. Each habitat type provides food, cover and shelter for a variety of mammal, bird, amphibian and reptile species common to northwest Colorado. Although all of the species are important members of native communities and ecosystems, most are common and have wide distributions within the state, region and project area.

Common species such as coyotes, cottontail rabbits, ground squirrels and several species of migratory birds can be found throughout the area. The also LSFO provides important habitat for big game species. Elk, mule deer and antelope can be found throughout the area year round. Several areas within the resource area provide critical winter habitat for big game species. Cliffs, rock outcrops, pinyon-juniper woodlands and riparian forests provide nesting habitat for a variety of raptors, including golden eagles, great horned owls, red-tailed hawks and prairie falcons.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Impacts to terrestrial wildlife would be similar to those described in the Migratory Bird Section. Additional camp sites for hunting would be approved on a case by case basis. Design features would help minimize potential impacts to wildlife and their habitat. Proposed sites that would have a negative impact to any sensitive species would not be approved.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: Impacts from management actions related to special recreation permits and required compliance with performance objectives do not vary by alternative. Under the no action alternative, camping permits would be analyzed on a case-by-case basis.

Environmental Consequences, Cumulative Impacts: Cumulative impacts would be similar to those described in the Migratory Bird section.

3.3.8 Wild Horses

Affected Environment: The LSFO manages the Sand Wash Herd Management Area (HMA). The Sand Wash HMA is very popular with wild horse enthusiasts and wildlife photographers. The Sand Wash Herd Management Area is located 45 miles west of Craig, Colorado, in the Sand Wash Basin. The HMA encompasses 157,730 total acres, of which 154,940 acres are public, 1,960 acres are private and 840 acres are managed by the State of Colorado. The HMA contains large areas of salt desert shrub plant communities that recover slowly from impacts such as

grazing and mechanical surface disturbance. The predominant plant community is sagebrush/perennial grass intermingled with rabbitbrush and salt desert shrubs such as shadscale, horsebrush, greasewood, and Nuttall's saltbush. In areas where soils and topography allow, Nuttall's saltbush is the dominant shrub and is associated with winterfat, budsage, and kochia in some areas. While the majority of the HMA boundary is fenced, horses in the Sand Wash herd roam freely through their range with no internal fencing or impassible topographic features to limit their movements. Fewer horses concentrate in the south, southwest and western portion of the HMA regardless of the time of year. This is the result of several factors including seasonal recreational traffic, lack of perennial water sources, saline water (less palatable), and home range preference. The southern and southwestern HMA boundary adjoins the West Boone Draw Allotment which is permitted for domestic horses between December and May of each year.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: SRPs are becoming more prevalent as more people pay for the opportunity to participate in activities on public lands and it is anticipated that the LSFO may see an increase in camping applications in association with hunting, guiding and outfitting SRPs. Big game hunting is a popular recreation activity currently taking place within the Sand Wash HMA, although wild horse viewing and OHV activities are also very popular. There has been a large increase in human activity HMA within the last 5 years, especially in those activities that focus on the wild horses, such as photography and viewing. As for the wild horses, increased human activity makes them more accustomed to human presence and are beginning to lose their wild and free-roaming behavior. This in turn has lead to wild horses getting increasingly close to humans, however, there have been no documented instances of a wild horse charging, striking, or kicking a human. The buffer zone needed between wild horses and humans before stress levels are reached has not be studied therefore it is undetermined. This becomes important during the foaling season when mares feel the need to protect their newborn foals.

By regulating specific recreation activities that involve wild horses in the HMA through the SRP process with terms and/or conditions the LSFO would regulate or prevent unnecessary stresses or reduce the potential interactions between humans and wild horses that could lead to a change in their wildness behavior or increase the risks of humans being charged, struck or kicked by wild horses. The LSFO could also regulate the location of commercial camps thereby protecting important water sources.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: Impacts from management actions related to special recreation permits and required compliance with performance objectives do not vary by alternative. Under the no action alternative, camping permits would be analyzed on a case-by-case basis.

Environmental Consequences, Cumulative Impacts: Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable impacts to wild horses includes but is not limited to: livestock grazing, wildlife and wild horse viewing, general recreation, big game hunting, oil and gas activities including seismic projects, wild horse gathers, and other aerial activities.

3.4 HERITAGE RESOURCES AND HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

3.4.1 Cultural Resources

A number of laws mandate federal agencies to consider the effect of their activities on cultural resources (i.e. historic and archaeological sites). The National Environmental Policy Act states that it is the responsibility of the federal government to preserve important historic and cultural aspects of the national heritage. The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) requires federal agencies to take into account the effect of federal undertakings (such as permitting SRP campsites) on cultural resources that are eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. In Colorado, the requirements of the NHPA are implemented under the terms of the Protocol Agreement between the Bureau of Land Management and the State Historic Preservation Officer.

Affected Environment: A records search and on-the-ground cultural resource survey were completed in June and July of 2014 to identify any historic and archaeological sites within the area of potential effect of the SRP campsites. The records search was completed by Little Snake Field Office archaeologist Brian Naze and the survey was carried out by archaeological technician Gary Collins. As of July 8, 2014, completion of the survey report is pending. The records review and survey indicated that one of the proposed campsites is situated on a noneligible site with historic and prehistoric components, and no cultural resources are present at the location of the remaining two campsites.

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Site 5MF2252 is a noneligible site with historic and prehistoric components. The historic component consists of a scatter of trash thought to be associated with a sheepherder or hunter camp. The prehistoric component is tentatively classified as an open architectural site based on the former presence of a possible, recently disturbed tipi ring. A total of about 200 flaked stone artifacts were widely scattered across the site. Projectile points of types produced during various time periods were collected from the surface. A portion of the site was test excavated by the BLM to determine if buried archaeological deposits are present. Their absence justified the determination that the tested portion of the site is not eligible to the National Register (Naze 1994). The remainder of the site was test excavated for the BLM by an archaeological consulting firm and was also found to be not eligible for the National Register (Tickner 1996). BLM and the State Historic Preservation Officer officially determined site 5MF2252 to be not eligible to the National Register on November 4, 1996.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Because recorded site 5MF2252 has been determined not eligible, permitting one of the proposed SRP campsites to be positioned on the site will not cause an adverse effect to an eligible site.

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Environmental Consequences, No Action: Impacts from management actions related to special recreation permits and required compliance with performance objectives do not vary by alternative. Under the no action alternative, camping permits would be analyzed on a case-by-case basis.

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Environmental Consequences, Cumulative Effects: Within the Little Snake Field Area, SRP campsites are few in number and far apart; therefore, the cumulative effect of permitting the campsites will not pose a substantial negative impact to cultural resources.

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References Cited

Naze, Brian

1994 Test Excavation of a Portion of Site 5MF2252 for Proposed Expansion of Moffat County Road Department's "Big Burn" Gravel Quarry. Report prepared by Bureau of Land Management, Little Snake Resource Area, Craig, Colorado.

Tickner, Paul A.

1996 Test Excavation of Site 5MF2252: Moffat County, Colorado. Report prepared by Alpine Archaeological Consultants, Montrose, Colorado for Bureau of Land Management, Little Snake Field Office, Craig, Colorado.

3.4.2 Native American Concerns

The proposed SRP campsites are not expected to be of concern to the Native American tribes that inhabited the Little Snake Field Area (LSFA). The Utes and the Shoshone are known to have inhabited the LSFA in historic times. The only site present at the proposed SRP campgrounds is ineligible site 5MF2252 (see Cultural Resources section for a discussion of this site). A Desert side-notched point was collected from the site. When found in northwest Colorado, this point type is believed by archaeologists to be diagnostic of Ute or Shoshone occupation. In 1996, the BLM funded an archaeological consulting firm to test excavate 5MF2252 to determine if the site is eligible to the National Register. A permit to excavate the site was issued to the firm under the authority of the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA). In compliance with ARPA, the Utes and Shoshone were contacted to solicit input as to whether or not issuing the permit would, in their opinion, "result in harm to, or destruction of, any religious or cultural site" of concern to Native Americans. In 1996, letters were sent to representatives of the Utes and the Shoshone that requested their input. A letter from the Utes of the Uintah and Ouray Reservation requesting more detailed information about the site was received by BLM. The requested information was sent via certified mail with a requested 30-day response time. No response from the Ute representative was received.

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3.4.3 Livestock Operations

Affected Environment: Approximately 1.3 million acres of public lands within the LSFO are currently permitted for livestock grazing. This 1.3 million acres is divided up into 348 grazing allotments. The livestock that graze within the LSFO are mainly cattle, sheep, and domestic

horses. The majority of cattle grazing occurs between the months of April and October with the majority of sheep grazing occurring during the winter months on the western portion of the resource area.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: The most common impact to livestock operations would primarily revolve around livestock distribution. Large numbers of people congregated in an area for an extended time may result in livestock being displaced from an area for the duration of the activity. There is also the potential for direct conflict with vehicles if livestock are hit or injured by vehicles associated with the camping permits. Range improvements used to manage and water livestock also have potential to be impacted based on the location of the camps. In general, impacts to livestock would be minimal based on coordination of the camp locations with BLM range specialists.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: Impacts from management actions related to special recreation permits and required compliance with performance objectives do not vary by alternative. Under the no action alternative, camping permits would be analyzed on a case-by-case basis.

Environmental Consequences, Cumulative Impacts: Cumulative impacts to livestock grazing are challenging to fully address without knowing the exact location of the camping permits that may be approved. Other activities that occur within LSFO include but are not limited to oil and gas development and mining activities. Cumulative impacts from other land uses do have the potential to impact authorized grazing and would be analyzed and addressed during grazing permit renewals.

3.5 SPECIAL DESIGNATIONS

3.5.1 Wilderness Study Areas

Affected Environment: The Bureau's primary interim management goal as defined in BLM Manual H-8550-1: Interim Management Policy for Lands Under Wilderness Review dated July 5, 1995 is "...to manage and protect those public lands which are under wilderness review, in such a manner so as to not impair their suitability for preservation as wilderness, until they are designated by Congress as wilderness, or until they are released from further wilderness consideration."

Specific policy guidance includes, but not limited to, that all proposals for uses and/or facilities within WSAs meet the criteria for:

1. **Nonimpairment:** The use, facility, or activity must be temporary that does not create surface disturbance or involve permanent placement of facilities. Surface disturbance is any new disruption of the soil or vegetation, including vegetative trampling, which would necessitate reclamation.

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2. Surface Disturbance: Surface disturbance is any new disruption of the soil or vegetation requiring reclamation within a WSA. Uses and facilities necessitating reclamation (i.e., recontouring of the topography, replacement of topsoil, and/or restoration of native plant cover) are surface disturbing and must be denied. Certain activities recognized as acceptable within a WSA, such as use of pack stock are allowable within a WSA although in the strictest sense, since they cause surface disturbance.

To foster efficient wilderness management, it is BLM's policy to minimize the establishment of new discretionary uses in WSAs that would be incompatible with possible wilderness designation, even when the uses would not in themselves exceed the nonimpairment standard. Some new uses, within or adjacent to WSAs, may create conflicts with management and preservation of wilderness values at a later time. Consideration should be given to the possible effect these uses may have on managing the WSAs as wilderness in the future. New uses, if authorized, must be temporary.

Primitive campsites for recreational use may be established anywhere in the WSA as long as they meet the nonimpairment criteria. Low impact camping techniques should be encouraged within all WSAs.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Some activities that in themselves are nonimpairing may require supporting facilities or activities that could impair wilderness suitability. If the supporting activity cannot be done in a nonimpairing manner, then the principal activity will not be approved.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: Impacts from management actions related to special recreation permits and required compliance with performance objectives do not vary by alternative. Under the no action alternative, camping permits would be analyzed on a case-by-case basis.

Environmental Consequences, Cumulative Impacts: It is recognized that many minor impacts of nonimpairing uses or facilities could accumulate to a point at which the total impact would impair wilderness suitability either by creating impacts that overall are noticeable, or by degrading the area's wilderness values so far as to constrain Congress's prerogative regarding the area's suitability for preservation as wilderness.

Mitigation: To prevent such cumulative impacts of ongoing uses from impairing wilderness suitability, the BLM will analyze and monitor the cumulative impacts. If impacts are becoming so great that the area's wilderness suitability could be impaired, the BLM will take steps to control those impacts by adjusting the conditions of use (such as time, place, and quantity) by prohibiting the expansion of the use, or by prohibiting the use altogether.

All WSAs are to be monitored on a minimum standard of surveillance that will ensure compliance with the IMP. A basic monitoring level of at least once per month during the months the area is accessible by the public should be adhered to, or more frequently if necessary because of potential use activities or resource conflicts.

CHAPTER 4—PUBLIC LAND HEALTH STANDARDS

4.1—INTRODUCTION

4.2—COLORADO PUBLIC LAND HEALTH STANDARDS

In January 1997, the Colorado State Office of the BLM approved the Standards for Public Land Health and amended all RMPs in the State. Standards describe the conditions needed to sustain public land health and apply to all uses of public lands.

4.2.1 Standard 1 Upland soils exhibit infiltration and permeability rates that are appropriate to soil type, climate, land form, and geologic processes.

Finding of most recent assessment:

Proposed Action:

No Action Alternative:

4.2.2 Standard 2 Riparian systems associated with both running and standing water function properly and have the ability to recover from major disturbance such as fire, severe grazing, or 100-year floods.

Finding of most recent assessment:

Proposed Action

No Action Alternative:

4.2.3 Standard 3 Healthy, productive plant and animal communities of native and other desirable species are maintained at viable population levels commensurate with the species and habitat's potential.

Finding of most recent assessment: Vegetative communities in the field office are in varying seral stages, with some areas meeting this standard and some areas failing this standard. Reasons for failure include: weed infestations, lack of perennial grasses and forbs and older, decadent sagebrush stands, resulting in higher than desired canopy cover.

Proposed Action: The Proposed Action would have very minor and localized impacts to vegetative and wildlife communities and would not preclude this standard from being met.

No Action Alternative: Current conditions would continue under this alternative, with portions of the field office meeting and portions failing this standard.

4.2.4 Standard 4 Special status, threatened and endangered species (federal and state), and other plants and animals officially designated by the BLM, and their habitats are maintained or enhanced by sustaining healthy, native plant and animal communities.

~~Finding of most recent assessment: Habitats for sensitive species in the field office are in varying seral stages, with some areas meeting this standard and some areas failing this standard. Reasons for failure include: weed infestations, lack of perennial grasses and forbs and older, decadent sagebrush stands, resulting in higher than desired canopy cover.~~

~~Proposed Action: The Proposed Action would have very minor and localized impacts to vegetative and wildlife communities and would not preclude this standard from being met.~~

~~No Action Alternative: Current conditions would continue under this alternative, with portions of the field office meeting and portions failing this standard.~~

~~**4.2.5 Standard 5** The water quality of all water bodies, including ground water where applicable, located on or influenced by BLM lands will achieve or exceed the Water Quality Standards established by the State of Colorado.~~

~~Finding of most recent assessment:~~

~~Proposed Action:~~

~~No Action:~~

SIGNATURE OF PREPARER:

SIGNATURE OF ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEWER:

DATE SIGNED

Finding of No Significant Impact
DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2014-0022-EA

Based upon a review of this Environmental Assessment and the supporting documents, I have determined that the Proposed Action is not a major federal action and will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance in context or intensity, as defined at 40 CFR 1508.27 and do not exceed those effects as described in the Little Snake Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (2011). An environmental impact statement is not required. This finding is based on the context and intensity of the project as described below.

Context: The project is a site-specific action directly involving BLM administered public lands that do not in and of itself have international, national, regional, or state-wide importance.

Intensity: The following discussion is organized around the 10 Significance Criteria described at 40 CFR 1508.27. The following have been considered in evaluating intensity for this Proposed Action:

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse

2. Degree of effect on public health and safety

3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas

4. Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial

5. Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risk

6. Degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts

8. Degree to which the action may adversely affect district, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed on the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources:

9. Degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat

10. Whether the action threatens a violation of federal, state, or local environmental protection law

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL: /s/ Tim J Wilson
Tim Wilson, Acting Field Manager

DATE SIGNED:

Little Snake Field Office
CO-N010-2014-0022-EA

Attachment 1

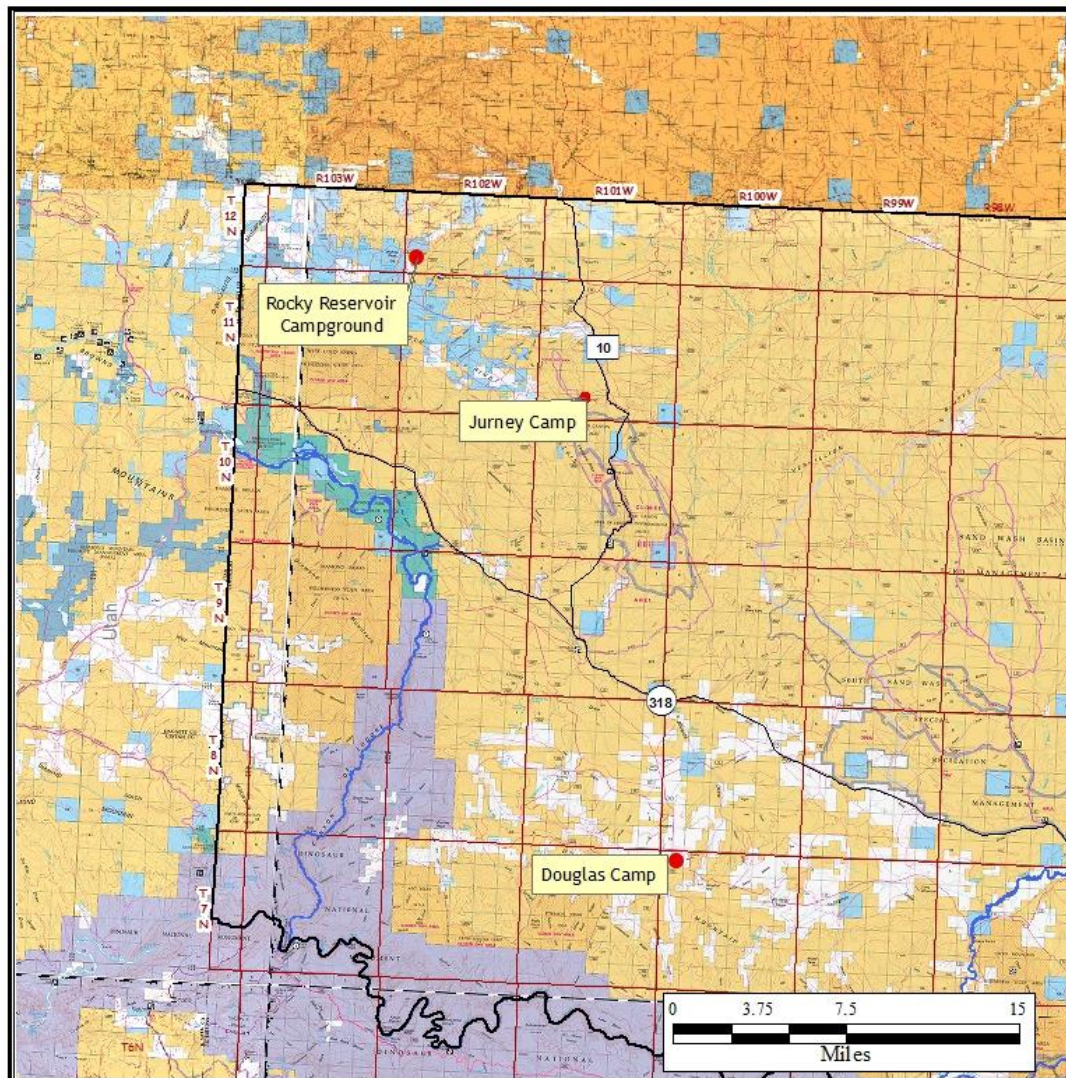
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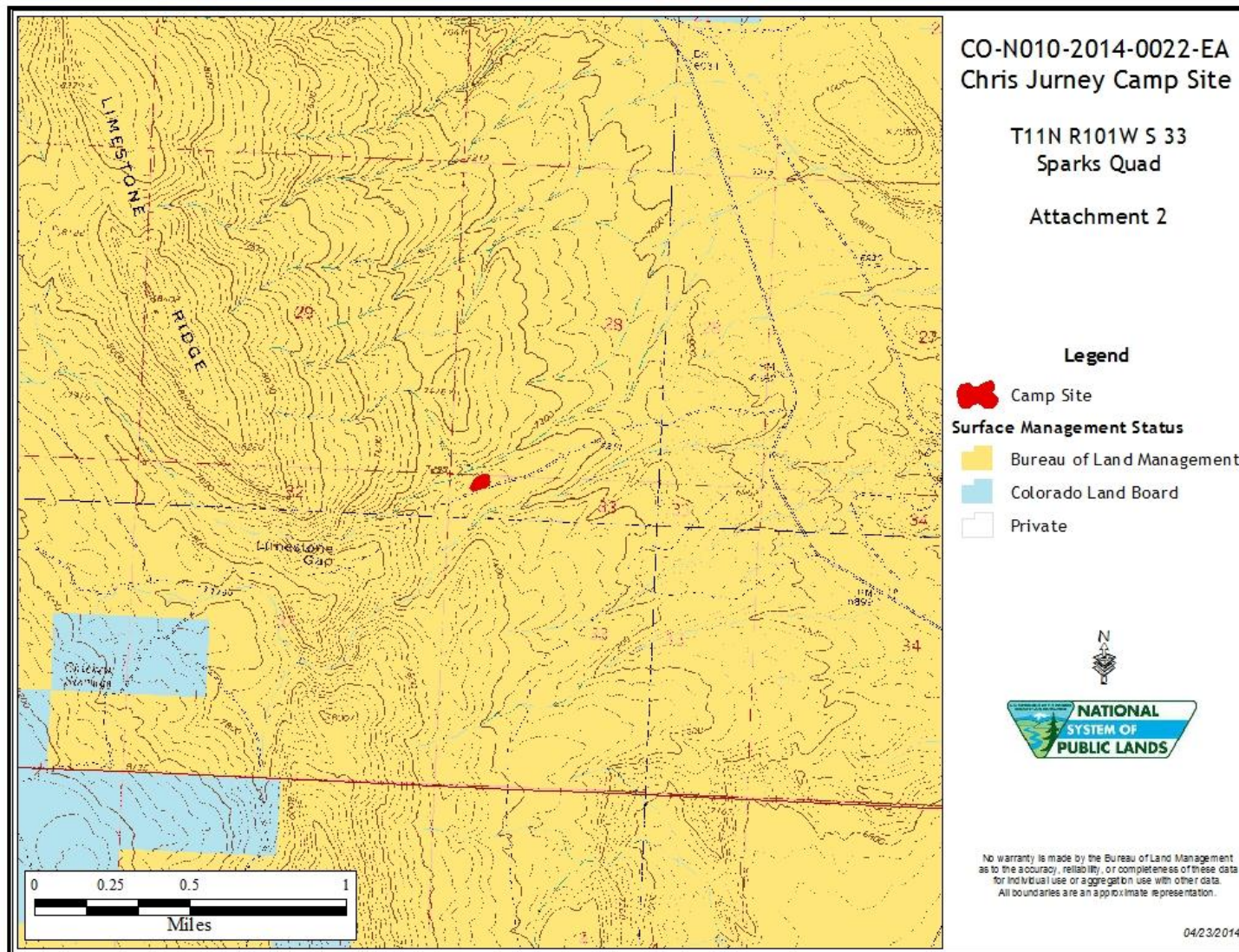
- Camp Site
- Surface Management Status**
 - Bureau of Land Management
 - Colorado Parks & Wildlife
 - Colorado Land Board
 - National Park Service
 - National Wildlife Refuge
 - Private

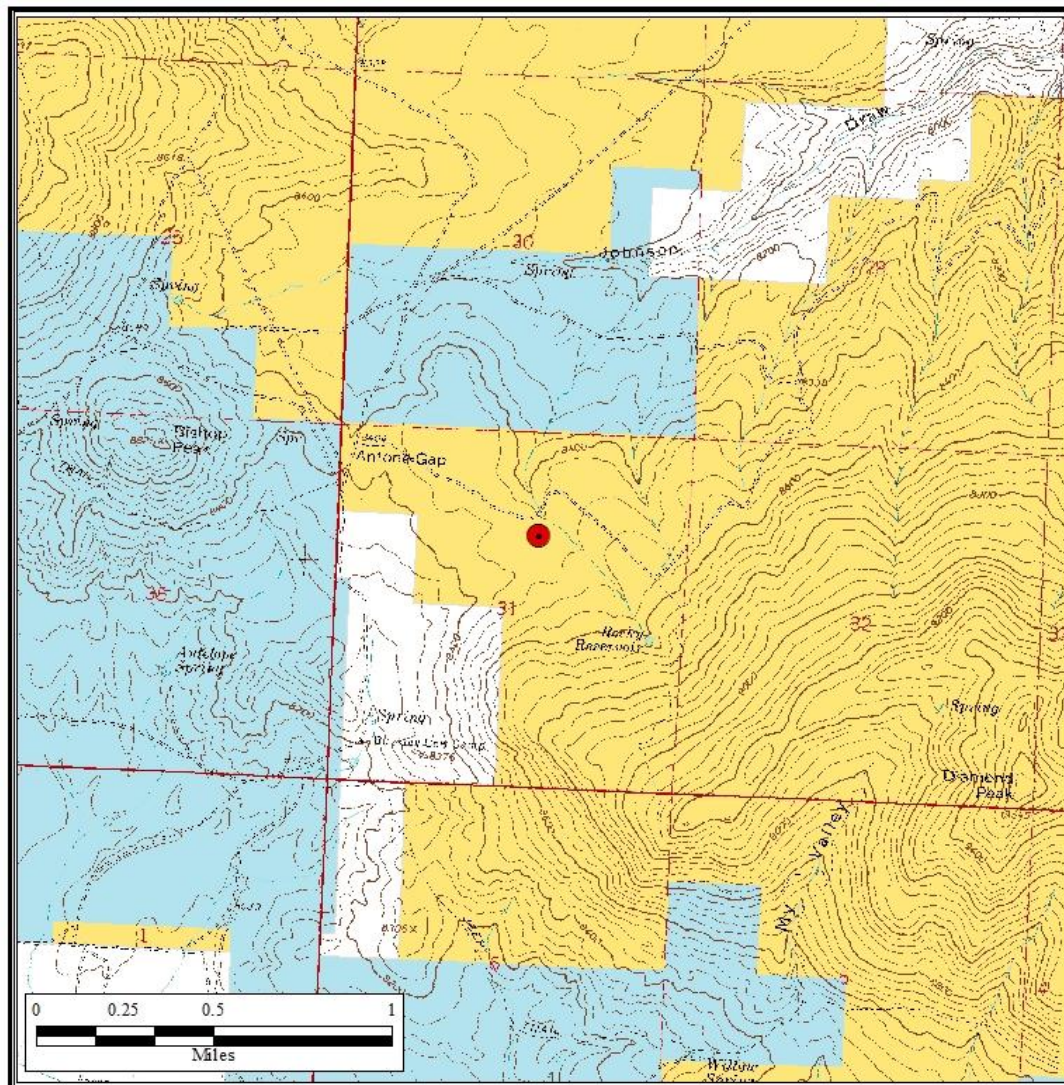


No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual use or aggregation use with other data. All boundaries are an approximate representation.

07/18/2014







CO-N010-2014-0022-EA
Rocky Reservoir
Camp Site

T12N R102W S 31
Beaver Basin Quad
Attachment 3

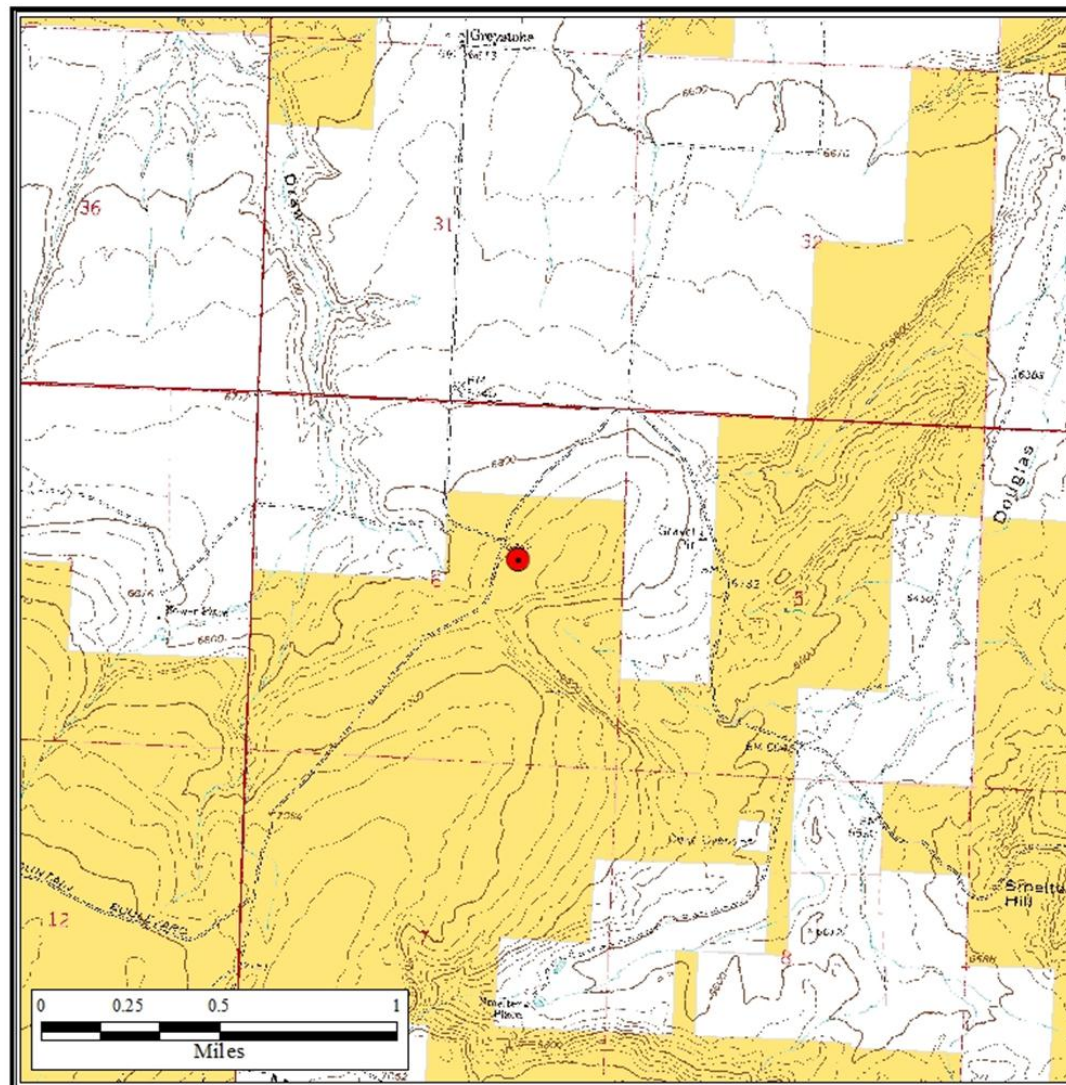
Legend

- Camp Site
- Surface Management Status**
- Bureau of Land Management
- Colorado Land Board
- Private



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04/23/2014



CO-N010-2014-0022-EA
Craig Wild Bunch
Douglas Camp Site

T7N R100W S 6
Greystone Quad
Attachment 5

Legend

- Camp Site
- Bureau of Land Management
- Private



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04/23/2014